

*Interment of the dead, a dictate of natural affection, sanctioned
by the word of God, and the examples of the good in
every age.*

A

SERMON

DELIVERED IN IPSWICH, SECOND PARISH,

JULY 23, 1818,

ON THE OCCASION OF

REINTERRING THE COFFINS

WHICH HAD BEEN

ROBBED OF THEIR CONTENTS.

BY ROBERT CROWELL,
Minister of said parish.

PREACHED AND PUBLISHED AT THE PARTICULAR REQUEST OF THE
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THE following sermon was necessarily written in great haste, to meet the occasion, for which it was designed, and without the most distant view to its publication. In revising it for the press, therefore, it was found necessary to condense some parts of it, and to enlarge upon others ; but, in regard to the sentiments, which pervaded the discourse, as it was delivered, no alterations, it is believed, have been made.

The history of the occasion is briefly this : Some time in the course of the past winter, suspicions were excited, it should seem, by no very definite circumstances, that the body of a young woman had been taken out of her grave, for anatomical purposes. These suspicions made such an impression upon several in the place, and particularly upon her parents and neighbours, that it was determined, in the Spring, to make an examination. An examination was accordingly made, and the painful discovery evinced, that their suspicions were too well founded. Her body was gone ! and the melancholy tidings gave such a shock to all in the place, as was never before felt. Further examinations, which were made to ascertain, if practicable, the extent of the evil, but chiefly with a view of quieting the troubled minds of those, who had recently buried friends, if peradventure they might be there, only deepened, and confirmed the distress. Before the examination was closed, it was ascertained that the bodies of not less than eight persons had been sacrilegiously stolen ; viz. Mrs. Mary Millet, aged 35 ; Miss Sally Andrews, 26 ; Mr. William Burnham, 79 ; Mr. Elisha Story, 65 ; Mr. Samuel Burnham, 26 ; Isaac Allen, 10 ; Philip Harlow, 10 : the eighth was not certainly known, but supposed to be Cæsar, a coloured man, buried several years since. Thus, within the short space of five months, was the heavy draught of

seven made upon the burying ground of a country village, containing little more than a thousand inhabitants. This number, including as it did, young and old, male and female, parent and child, brother and sister, spread the unusual distress through a very extensive and respectable circle of relations and friends. Meetings of the inhabitants were held on the occasion, and resolutions passed, expressing their abhorrence of the deed, and adopting measures, to detect, if possible, and to bring to justice, the perpetrators of it; and the sum of five hundred dollars, or more, was subscribed by individuals to carry these measures into effect. A vote was also passed, authorizing the standing Committee of the parish to inter the empty coffins, in a grave to be prepared for the purpose, and to request the minister of the parish to deliver a discourse, suited to the occasion. This request was accordingly made, and the following is the discourse preached on that occasion.

S E R M O N.

JOHN XX. 13.—*They say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.*

IT is a pleasing consideration, and one which must commend the Christian Religion to every man's conscience, that it neither destroys, nor diminishes, but sanctifies and strengthens, the tender sympathies and social feelings of nature. It makes better husbands and wives, better parents and children, better magistrates and subjects, better masters and servants. It converts enmity into love, and draws more closely the bands of friendship. While the irreligious and profane are characterized as without natural affection, the Christian has natural affection in lively and vigorous exercise, though at all times subordinate to the love of his Maker, and subservient to the interests of his kingdom. He above others is prepared to “rejoice with them that do rejoice, and to weep with them that weep.” He above others realizes the nature and importance of the various social and relative duties, and conscientiously endeavours to fulfil them.

These sentiments are not only inculcated in the precepts of scripture, but beautifully exemplified in the lives of those most eminent for their purity and benevolence. What cheerful obedience to his parents, tenderness and fidelity to his friends, forgiveness and benevolence to his

enemies, joy with them that rejoiced, and sorrow with them that sorrowed, did our great and holy Exemplar invariably exhibit? Behold him, in the midst of the agonies of his cross, recollecting his filial duties to his widow-ed mother, and truly honoring her in that ample provision, which he made for her maintenance, when, with his dying breath, he committed her to the care of the faithful and affectionate John.

His immediate followers also, who shared largely in his instructions, and drank deeply of his spirit, exemplified the same principles of tenderness and benevolence, of constancy and fidelity. Some of them, indeed, in the hour of dismay, were betrayed into cowardice, and into a treacherous forsaking of their friend in the hour of adversity; but they soon “ recovered themselves out of the snare of the devil,” and exhibited, ever after, a diligence, and fidelity, and courage in their Master’s service, as praiseworthy, as their flight had been shameful. Others there were, and particularly of his female disciples, who manifested, through the most trying scenes, a firmness and constancy in the cause of their Lord, rarely if ever equalled. Notwithstanding the forbidding aspect of a mercenary and brutal soldiery, the derisions and threatnings of an infuriated mob, they drew near to the cross, and never forsook it, while the breath of life remained in their persecuted and agonizing Friend. And, when they could no longer behold him a living spirit, they looked with affectionate veneration, and tender solicitude, upon his lifeless body. They were not contented to leave the bloody scene, till they had witnessed his body taken down from the cross, by some friendly hand, decently robed in linen garments, with a napkin about the head, and laid in the faithful sepulchre.

Nor did their affectionate and assiduous regard for the body of their deceased Lord end with his burial. As soon

as their Sabbath was over, they were desirous of viewing once more that earthly tabernacle, which had made a part of their divine and much-loved Friend, and which, they believed, would be united to him again, to see if it were safe, and to show it still further respect, by strewing upon it costly spices. So strong was this affectionate solicitude, in some of the female disciples, that they could not wait the full approach of morning, but rose up, and went to the sepulchre, "while it was yet dark." On arriving at the sepulchre, their fearful apprehensions for the safety of the body were instantly excited, in seeing that the sepulchre had been disturbed. The stone, which had been set up at its mouth, was rolled away. Not daring to enter in, it being then dark, and concluding at once that some evil hand had taken away the body of Jesus, they hastened back to the dwelling of Peter and John, and accosted them with the distressing tidings, "*They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.*"—"Peter, therefore, went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together; and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he, stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter, following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin that was about his head.—Then went in also that other disciple, and he saw, and believed. For, as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead."

What they here "saw and believed," was, that the body of Jesus was taken from the grave by some designing person; They knew then no other way, to account for the fact of his being gone; being ignorant of the scripture that he must rise again from the dead; that is, that he must rise again so soon; for they knew, and believed the scripture,

that there would be a general resurrection of the bodies of all men, at the last day. Having thus satisfied themselves, that the body of Jesus was stolen from the tomb, Peter and John "went away again unto their own home."

By this time Mary had returned, and, though satisfied as well as they, that the body of her Lord was stolen, yet her sorrowful spirit still lingered at the empty tomb, in the hope of hearing some tidings of it.

"Mary stood without at the sepulchre, weeping; and, as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white, sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou?" Not noticing, probably, through the excess of her grief, that they were angels, she answered them, without hesitation, or dismay, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."

From this portion of sacred history, we derive the following sentiment:

To entomb the bodies of our deceased friends, and to desire that they may rest in their graves undisturbed, is a dictate of natural affection, sanctioned by the word of God, and the examples of the good in every age.

In illustrating and enforcing this sentiment, I shall first consider its truth; and then the reason on which it is founded.

I. Its truth.

That natural affection directs to an interment of the dead, and prompts the desire that they may rest undisturbed is a truth so obvious, as to need no proof, did not the particular purposes of some lead them to deny it, and to treat the practice of burial, as well enough in itself, but as originating in nothing better than a superstitious adherence to custom, or, at most, in expediency, as the easiest

way of preventing the dead from being noxious to the health of the living.

In regard to persons, who view the practice in this light, it might reasonably enough be expected, that they would be as well satisfied, so far as it concerned their own feelings, in having their dead tumbled into a ditch, or thrown to the dogs, or, still better, in having them dissected, and exposed, for the inspection of the curious, and the promotion of useful knowledge, than in having them decently buried, and rest in their graves. But, whatever may be their speculations on this subject, and whatever may be their conduct towards the dead of others, when self interest, or self gratification, requires a particular treatment of them, we believe that their practice, when called, in divine Providence, to part with a wife, or child, or any near, and beloved friend, invariably accords with that of men in general, and thus affords proof, that natural affection, when not biassed by self interest, or any evil concupiscence, directs us to inter, with decency and solemnity, the bodies of our departed friends.

We mean not to say, that there are none, who diminish, and even destroy, their natural affections, and so render themselves capable of conducting towards their relatives and friends, in a manner very different from that which "even nature teacheth." This, the scripture informs us, is the fact in regard to all, who yield themselves the willing slaves of sin. Now that such should be indifferent, as to what is done with the bodies of their deceased relatives, so far from weakening the argument in question, strengthens and confirms it. For, if natural affection prompts us to inter the bodies of our dead, then, the want of this will lead us to neglect them, or to dispose of them in any manner, that convenience, or profit, or the custom of others may suggest. But, if it has been the general practice of men, in all ages, as history abundantly

shows, to sepulchre their dead, and to treat them with affectionate veneration, and if there are no exceptions to this general practice, but where their conduct, in other respects, shows that they are without natural affection, then, the presumption, at least, is strong, that the principles, and tender sympathies of nature, do require an interment of the dead.

“The privilege of burial,” says a learned commentator, “has been always sought and prized by all nations, whom nature and humanity teacheth to preserve the bodies of men, which have been the temples of reasonable, immortal souls, from contempt and violation; so especially by Christians as a testimony and pledge of their future resurrection.”*

“It has generally been the custom,” says another excellent expositor, “in the church of God, to *inter* the dead (though burning has been much in use amongst *others*:) and indeed it more aptly expresses an acquiescence in that sentence, ‘until thou return unto the ground, from whence thou wast taken.’”†

Now we know, that in regard to the dead, no different custom from that of interment, has been observed, in any nation, where idolatry has not first darkened the understanding, and rendered the feelings hardened, and ferocious.

The voice of Inspiration tells us, that “the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.”

The inhuman custom of burning the living with the dead, of drowning their children when they become burdensome, and of exposing their sick, and aged, to die of hunger, or to be devoured by wild beasts, confirms the declaration of Scripture, and shows us, that idolatry tends to destroy all natural affection, and to produce the most

* Poole’s Annot. on Gen. xxiii. 4.

† Scot on ibid.

unrelenting cruelties towards those whom we ought most to love and cherish.

That so much of natural affection, therefore, should remain, amongst any idolatrous tribes, as to lead them to venerate, and inter their dead, is a matter of greater surprise, considering the direct tendency of idolatry to cruelty, than that some of them should be so destitute of it, as to burn their dead, or cast them forth to the wild beasts. But, by far the greater part, even of heathen nations, do venerate, and inter their dead, and sacredly guard them from all violation :* which shows us that this is among the last things which the cruelty of idolatry exterminates from the human character. The sepulchres of their fathers have often been the rallying point of savage as well as civilized nations, when they would most strenuously resist an invading foe by the consideration of all that is precious and sacred. We may consider it, therefore, as a truth, established by the practice of all nations, that nature teacheth a veneration for the dead, and a desire, that they may rest in their graves undisturbed.

This sentiment is also corroborated, by that repugnance, which all humane persons feel, to any molestation, or disturbance of the dead. It is presumed, that all, who hear of the graves of the dead being disturbed, and their bodies drawn out of them, must experience a degree of violence done to their own feelings, though the dead, thus

* " As we proceeded along the shore, I observed a piece of wood stuck in the ground at the foot of a large tree, rudely carved and painted with red ochre. Wishing to ascertain for what purpose it was placed there, I was advancing towards it, when my companion stopping short, and crying out, *taboo, taboo*, gave me to understand that a man was buried there, and desired me not to approach it. With this injunction I thought it right to comply, though on learning what the piece of wood was designed for, my curiosity was still more excited than at first. The word *taboo*, in the language of these people means *sacred*, and the coincidence between rude and civilized nations, in venerating the places where the dead repose, cannot fail to be interesting to the man who takes a philosophic and comprehensive view of the human character." Nicholas's voyage to N. Zealand; as quoted by the Christian Observer.

treated, may have been strangers to them, and the scene remote from them. How much greater then must be the horror, and disgust of those, who witness such ravages amongst the houses of the dead ! And who can adequately conceive, but they who have felt it, the keen anguish, and almost inconsolable grief of those, who are thus inhumanly robbed of the body of a husband, or wife, of a parent, or child, of a brother, or sister ? Like Mary, they linger about the empty grave, weeping, because they have taken away their friend, and they know not where they have laid him.* Not only is the wound, inflicted by divine Providence in the death of their friend, thereby opened, and made to bleed afresh, but an additional one is inflicted, by the hand of the wicked, whose tender mercies are cruel.

We have no hesitation in saying, that such must be the anguish of all, who have their dead stolen, or otherwise maltreated, if they have one spark of humanity, or of natural affection, glowing in their breasts. It is on the assumption of this fact, that hostile nations, invading the country of their foes, and filled with the desire of wreaking their vengeance upon them to the utmost, have, in addition to other wanton cruelties, opened the graves of their dead, and scattered them upon the face of the earth. And this they have done, not only as an indignity towards the dead, but as a terror to, and a punishment of the living. But why should it produce this effect upon the living, if there were not a foundation in nature to venerate the dead, and most earnestly to desire that they may repose in their

* We of course except, from this general sympathy, those, whose business it is to disturb the dead for filthy lucre's sake, and those, who employ them in this unholy traffic. To whatever good purpose the latter may appropriate these stolen bodies, they certainly partake of all the guilt of the former, if the maxim be true, that the receiver is as bad as the thief. Nor ought they to be screened from any of the odium, which is attached to a stealth and merchandize of the dead ; since if it were not for their patronage, and suggestion, none would be guilty of this outrage upon decency and humanity.

graves without molestation? And why should nations assume it as a given point, that this will be the invariable effect of such a treatment of the dead, upon the feelings of their enemy, if they did not know, from their own experience, what it was to feel a deep veneration for their own dead; a veneration which they would also feel for the dead of their foes, did not a spirit of revenge overcome, and, for the time at least, extinguish it.

Thus far have we considered the interment of the dead, and a sacred care of their bodies, as resting on the broad basis of natural affection. We have chosen to rest it on this, as its primary foundation, because this, we believe, best agrees with fact; as appears from the practice of interment amongst nations in general. But, it is asked, have we, as Christians, any authority from the word of God, for the maintenance of this practice, so as to make the omission of it a sin? We answer; whatever is unnatural, or inhuman, is equally a sin, and even more so in the Christian, than in any other. The apostle, in reference to professors of Christianity, says, "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." Such conduct would be unnatural, and inhuman, and would therefore, not only take from any one all claim to the distinctive character of a christian, but sink him even below the very heathen. But, if to be without natural affection is to deny the faith, and to be worse than an infidel, then it must follow, that the principle of natural affection, when sanctified, makes a part, and an important part too, of the Christian Religion; and, that the dictates of the one, become the dictates and laws of the other. Now, if it be admitted, that a decent interment of the dead, and a desire that they may repose in their graves unmolested, are dictates of nature, and humanity, then it must be admitted, that they are dictates also of our holy religion.

But we have something more than inference to establish the truth of this sentiment. We have the plain intimations of God's word, and the example "of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

In respect to example, the feelings and conduct of the disciples, towards the body of their deceased Lord, show us, very explicitly, what is our duty towards our departed friends.

With what pious care, and tenderness, was the body of Jesus taken down from the cross, washed from its blood, wrapped in clean linen garments, with costly spices, and laid in a new and consecrated tomb? With what eager solicitude, and holy veneration, did the disciples visit the tomb, soon after the interment, to add to the costly spices, and to see if the body were safe. How heavy was their sorrow, how heart-rending their grief, on finding that the body was gone, carried, they knew not whither, disposed of, they knew not how! Does not all this proclaim, in language more forcible than words, how highly they valued the privilege of burying their deceased friends, of knowing where they were entombed, and of knowing too, that they were resting there undisturbed? Could they view it as a light evil, a matter to be made sport with, that the body of their dear Lord was stolen out of his grave, as they then fully believed? Or ought they rather, instead of giving way to grief for their loss, to have upbraided their own folly, in looking into the sepulchre, to see any thing about the body? since if they had not examined, they would have been ignorant of their loss, and so have had no occasion for this great sorrow.

Shall we then condemn them in this their conduct towards the dead; Shall we say, that it was unnatural, or foolish, or superstitious? Or shall we not rather commend them? conscious, that they followed in every step the dictates of natural affection;—of natural affection sancti-

fied, and regulated, and exalted, as it was in them, by the renewing grace of God ?

If any choose to say, that this, their affectionate veneration and pious care of the body of Jesus, sprang from a principle of grace, rather than from any thing inherent in nature, we have no quarrel with them. We affirm that there was something in it equal, at least, to natural affection, and to natural affection too, in a sanctified state.

That we have no reason to disapprove of the care, and tenderness, and veneration, which the disciples showed to the body of Jesus, and of their almost inconsolable grief, at the painful discovery of its being gone, appears from the fact, that the risen Saviour honored Mary, first of all, with a gracious manifestation of himself to her, while in the very height of her grief for the supposed robbery of his body : thus verifying the divine declaration, “ Them that honor me, I will honor.”

Had not the burial of the dead been proper, and natural, and more agreeable to the will of God, than any other way of treating them, our Lord Jesus would not have considered the woman, who anointed him for his *burial*, as showing him great respect, as well as holy love ; nor would he have commended her so highly for it.

We might adduce several other instances of pious care of the dead, from the New Testament records ; as the frequent, and mournful visits of Martha, and Mary, at the tomb of their brother Lazarus ; devout men carrying Stephen to his burial ; and pious friends bathing the body of Dorcas, after her death, and laying it in an upper chamber ; but we turn to the Old Testament, to see what were the feelings and conduct of the patriarchs, and prophets, in relation to their dead.

Abraham was an eminent servant of God. So ardent was his piety, so strong his faith, that the apostle represents him as the father of believers. He was one too,

with whom God frequently conversed, and who drank deep of heavenly wisdom, and had such a clear insight into the gospel plan, that he saw the day of Christ, and rejoiced. Now, should we not esteem it a privilege, could we converse with this holy patriarch, and hear from his lips, in what manner we should feel, and conduct, towards the bodies of the dead? His example is upon the inspired record, “and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh.” Called to part with his beloved Sarah, the wife of his youth, this venerable man of God is affected to tears, that he shall converse with her spirit no more upon earth. Her body, once animated with life, and the companion, and residence of her immortal spirit, is all that now remained of one, who filled so large a place in his affections. And with what respectful attention, and affectionate solicitude, does he dispose of that? Though obliged to bury it out of his sight, yet he seeks for this purpose some precious spot, which he may consecrate to the dead, and in which the body of his friend may rest undisturbed. The courteous offer of the children of Heth, of the choicest of their sepulchres, for the interment of his dead, Abraham as courteously refused, because not answering to that affectionate respect, which he wished to show for his dead, by being at some cost for a sepulchre of his own. He chose therefore to purchase one of their choicest fields, containing a sepulchre, and shaded with “trees” “in all the borders round about,” at the price of four hundred shekels of silver, “for a possession of a burying place.” There was Sarah buried, and there, in process of time, were laid the bones of the patriarch himself.* In this hallowed ground were gathered also the bones of many of their descend-

* Query. What, may we suppose, would have been the feelings, and the conduct, of this humane, and pious prince, who, when his brother Lot was robbed of his all, so generously and so gallantly fought for him, and rescued his goods from the enemy, had his own sepulchre been robbed of the body of his wife?

ants. “ Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people.”—“ Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers. And were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought.” When any of their relatives, or of their household died, while they were pursuing a journey, and they were obliged to bury them by the way, the most suitable place was selected for the purpose, by the pious patriarchs, and some memorial set up, which should designate the hallowed spot.

“ Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died, and she was buried beneath Bethel, under an oak ; and the name of it was called Allon-bachuth,” that is, “ the oak of weeping.” “ And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem. And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave : that is the pillar of Rachel’s grave unto this day.” Such was the pious care, which the patriarchs took of their dead. And such, no doubt, had been felt, and exhibited, by all the humane and pious, from the beginning of the world. Later prophets, and devout ones, continued to have the same views of the privilege of burial, and to exercise the same tender care towards the bodies of the dead. Thus “ David sent messengers unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, and said unto them, Blessed be ye of the Lord, that ye have shewed this kindness unto your lord, even unto Saul, and have buried him. And now the Lord shew kindness and truth unto you : and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing.” The same feelings of tenderness for the dead, and the same estimation of a decent burial of them, appear in the following lamentation of this devout prince, over his slaughtered friends whom he could not have the privilege of burying. “ Our bones are scattered at the grave’s mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth.” Such is the example, which both Old and New Testament Saints

have set us, in relation to the dead, and such has been the practice of God's people, in every age of the church since. And does it not appear, from this cursory view of the example of the good in relation to the dead, that the more enlightened, and pious, any of them have been, the greater has been their affectionate veneration for their deceased friends, and the more faithful, and assiduous, their care of their bodies ?

But we pass from the example of God's people, to the intimations and example of God himself, in reference to this subject.

We say intimations, because God hath not seen fit to reveal unto us our duty, in this respect, by any positive precepts. The true reason of this probably is, because natural affection, which true holiness never weakens, but sanctifies and strengthens, so plainly dictates our duty in regard to it. But, though issuing no positive injunction, yet he hath not left us without very strong, and unequivocal intimations of his holy will, in regard to the interment of the dead.

In the sentence of death, passed upon man in consequence of his apostacy, God plainly intimated his will, as to the disposal of the lifeless body : "till thou return unto the ground : for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." If it be said, that this was an evil, and a part of the curse to be inflicted on man, as doubtless it was, still it does not follow, that it was so great an evil, as any other way of treating the dead would have been. Connected indeed with Redemption, it is to be followed by a blessing to believers, even the resurrection of their bodies in "glory, and honor, and immortality."

That to rest beneath the ground, was the smallest evil, to which the body of sinful man could be subjected, after death, and was comparatively a privilege, and a blessing, appears from the additional curse, denounced upon some,

notorious for their impiety, that they should not be buried, but be cast forth upon the earth, a prey to its beasts, or to the fowls of heaven. Thus of Ahab and Jezebel it was declared, by Elijah, from the mouth of the Lord, that the dogs should eat their carcasses. The judgment was even extended to their posterity : “Him that dieth of Ahab in the city, the dogs shall eat ; and him that dieth in the field, shall the fowls of the air eat.”

Jehoiakim was another wicked prince. He profanely burnt the word of God, because it contained truths disagreeable to him. The following is the curse, which God inflicted upon him for this and other flagrant crimes. “Therefore thus saith the Lord of Jehoiakim king of Judah ; He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David : and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat and in the night to the frost. And I will punish him, and his seed, and his servants, for their iniquity.”—“They shall not lament for him, saying, ah, my brother ! or ah, sister ! they shall not lament for him, saying, ah, lord ! or, ah, his glory ! He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.”

As the highest aggravation of those miseries, which should come upon the rebellious Jews by the Chaldean invasion, God declares to them, that their enemies would open the graves of their dead, and cast forth the bodies of their kindred and friends upon the earth. “At that time, saith the Lord, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves ; and they shall spread them before the sun,”—“they shall not be gathered, nor be buried, they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth.”

From these maledictions we learn, that not only is the want of a decent burial a great evil, but also to be taken

out of the grave after we are buried. We learn also from the exceptions, which God makes against the burial of the notoriously wicked, that it is his will, that others, who have not forfeited this privilege by their crimes, should be decently interred, and be suffered to rest in their graves.

This determination of his will is further declared by his own conduct, in regard to the body of his servant Moses.

The character of Moses was so illustrious, and exalted, that God foresaw that the Jews, from an inordinate veneration of his relicts, would be tempted to idolize them. Hence he did not see fit that these relicts should be among them, or that they should even know where they were. Still, however, He thought it proper, and important, that Moses should be buried. He might have disposed of his body in some other way, just as easily, and just as effectually, to prevent the evil in view. He might have cast it into some obscure place in the wilderness, where it would never have been found, and where the wild beasts would soon have devoured it; or he might have ordered the Jews to burn it with fire, and to scatter the ashes to the winds, or to cast it to the dogs, and in this way most effectually have removed this particular temptation to idolatry. But rather than treat the body in any such way, rather than set such an example of disrespect, and inhumanity, towards the dead, and, at the same time, to prevent the evil foreseen, God chose to work a miracle for the burial of Moses. The Lord "buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bath-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." Yea, He continued his miraculous interposition, in relation to the body. For, when the Devil was about to disturb it, and to make some use of it, (probably to expose it to the Jews as a temptation to idolatry,) God sent his archangel, Michael, to contend with him, and to guard the sepulchre.

Does not this conduct of God towards the body of Moses, plainly show us, that in no case whatever, except that of criminals, is it proper, and right, to omit sepulchreing the dead? That, if any great good is likely to accrue to society, from any other way of treating them, this good must never be sought for in any violation of the rights of the dead to a decent interment, and to repose unmolested, nor in any outrage, no, nor in any *hazard* of any outrage, upon the feelings of the living? If God judge it important, and necessary, that society should experience any particular good, which yet cannot be obtained, by ordinary means, without sin, He can easily work a miracle to effect it; and thus preclude the necessity of the sinful aid of man. It was necessary for the good of the nation, that the body of Moses should not be buried among the Jews. It was morally fit, however, that it should be buried somewhere. God, therefore, miraculously interred it, and placed the fact upon his inspired record, for the satisfaction of his people, and to give his sanction to the duty of interring the dead.

Having, as I trust, very fully established the important sentiment, suggested by the text, let us proceed to consider briefly,

II. Why natural affection requires an interment of the dead, and that they should remain in their graves unmolested.

The reason of this is founded on the grand principle of association, so deeply implanted in our natures. Does an object excite our disgust? a degree of the same odium becomes attached to the objects, in immediate connexion with it. When a person, for example, becomes guilty of some odious crime, his very mien, and deportment, his dress, and visage, partake of this odium, and though the same perhaps as before, yet awaken in us very different sensations. The same would be extended to innocent

relatives, did not the principle of natural justice, which is, or ought to be, more powerful than that of association, break the connexion in our minds, and separate the innocent from the guilty.

So, also, when any object commands our affectionate veneration, we love and venerate those objects, connected with it. This is particularly the case, when the primary object of our affection is withdrawn from us : then its appendages seem to rise in our estimation. We value them, we love them, not only as belonging to our friend, but as pleasing remembrancers, which awaken in our minds the lovely image, with a thousand tender recollections associated with it. If there be any source of grief connected with them ; if death have snatched away our friend, and these memorials are all that we shall ever see of him again upon earth, then the pleasure resulting from them becomes tinged with sorrow. We look upon them with a mournful satisfaction. But still they are precious, they are doubly precious ; for grief hath now consecrated them, and they can be viewed, and handled, only with tenderness and veneration.

Thus when the garments, and other appendages, of one that hath deceased abroad, are returned to the mourning friends, how tenderly, and affectionately, are they received, and viewed, and disposed of. To treat them as common objects would be impiety to the dead.

It is on this principle, that the name of a person is lovely or disagreeable, accordingly as the person is lovely or odious in our view. The name of a friend, whom we tenderly love, and especially if that friend is numbered with departed spirits, is itself lovely and sacred. We can never hear it used with levity, or contempt, without considering it as a sort of profanation.

Now if the garments, and other lighter appendages, and the very name itself, of a beloved friend, become, on

this principle, sacredly dear to us, how much more must the body, which makes a part of the person himself?

Considered as the workmanship of God, and the glory of his earthly creation, the human form is itself entitled to respect. This respect rises to veneration, when we consider it as made to be the residence, and the companion, of an immortal spirit. Sin, it is true, hath marred both soul and body, and causes the latter to corrupt and moulder again to dust. But then it will be raised again, no more to die ; and be reunited with its spirit, no more to be separated ; and, in the case of the redeemed, be crowned together with its companion, with honor and glory. If therefore we love and venerate our friend, is it not natural, is it not rational, is it not unavoidable, that we should treat his body, formed with such divine workmanship, and destined to such noble ends, with tenderness and care ? That, if he hath gone from this world, and left his mortal part with us, which had so long been his companion, and which will ere long be again, through eternity, we should protect it from insult, or the least disrespect, and commit it to the earth, that though sown in corruption, it may be raised in incorruption ?

It is certainly natural, and rational, that we should feel a sympathy, and a growing attachment to our own bodies, which are our companions through this life, and which, after a short separation, will be our companions through life everlasting. “ No man ever yet hated his own flesh ; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church.” One part of the bitterness of death, though confessedly but a small part, is that reluctance we feel, to separate from that, which has so long made a part of ourselves. But this, with every other part of the curse, is removed by the hope, that we shall receive our bodies again, “ fashioned like unto Christ’s glorious body,” never more to be separated from us. Nor can it be a

matter of indifference to those, who have a proper respect for themselves, and who are partakers of this blessed hope, in what manner their bodies are treated after death. If they choose to forego the rites of burial, and the resting in their graves till the resurrection, privileges which have been prized by all God's people, and which God himself hath denied to none but the notoriously wicked, they should weigh well the sacrifice they are about to make, and be fully persuaded, that the good to be effected by it, in the advancement of a particular science, will more than counterbalance the evils of weakening the principles of nature, of impairing the salutary influence of a distinction between the treatment of the bodies of those, who have forfeited their persons to civil justice, and of those who have demeaned themselves in a manner to be entitled to its protection, and, above all, of wounding, or hardening, the tender feelings of surviving friends, if any such they leave. For ourselves, we do not believe that any Christian has a right to dispose of his body, which is the temple of the Holy Ghost, in a manner which God has thought fit only for the vilest criminal. But, whatever may be thought of the expediency, or propriety, of willing our bodies to be used for the advancement of an important science, it is very certain that we cannot use the bodies of our friends, or suffer them to be used, in this manner, unless, as in the case supposed above, they may and do thus bequeath them, without a destitution of all natural affection, and a violation of every principle of justice. For, as we have shown, in proportion as we love and venerate our deceased friends, shall we venerate, and esteem, all memorials of them, and especially their bodies, which made a part of their persons ; and prize the privilege of committing them to the consecrated sepulchre, as the property of God, in the full belief, that he will bring them again, at the last day, and restore them to their kindred spirits.

Such, I conceive, is the natural influence, which this powerful principle of association has upon our minds, in relation to our dead. An influence, which, as we have seen, pure religion does not counteract, but, on the contrary, sanctions and strengthens. And the obvious reason of this is, that to counteract a tender care of the bodies of our friends, is to counteract, and ultimately to destroy, true friendship itself. For, as the primary object of our affection naturally and unavoidably excites some regard for the objects intimately connected with it, so the manner in which we treat these objects, with greater or less respect, and attention, will increase, or diminish, the affection for the primary object itself. If in the absence of the primary, we cherish an affectionate respect and veneration for its secondaries, we nourish, and keep alive, and even increase, our veneration, and love, for the primary itself. But, if by gradual neglect, or disrespect, towards these secondary objects, we wholly neglect, or despise them, this neglect, and contempt, is returned, through the same channel of association, by which we first received the opposite feelings, to the primary object; so that, instead of venerating, we despise it. Hence this principal becomes of vast practical importance to us all; and it becomes us to take heed how we conduct, not only towards those objects, that we ought to venerate and love for what they are in themselves, but towards all connected with them.

A person in the habit of treating a house of God with respect and veneration, because God is worshipped in it, will find his reverence for God thereby awakened and increased. But the person, on the contrary, who indulges in levity, in a house consecrated to God, and exercises nothing but contempt towards it, and its holy altars, will soon find his irreverence and contempt towards God himself, greatly increased. To apply these remarks to the subject before us. No one can treat the memorials of a

departed friend, and much less his body, with the least disrespect, or in a manner that shall imply the least want of tenderness, and affectionate veneration, without diminishing his natural affection for that friend, and shutting up his bowels against him. No one, unless they do it as an act of public justice, can treat the body of any rational spirit, with disrespect, or with any thing verging to cruelty, without lessening their value of the life and happiness of rational beings, and that tenderness, and respect, which they ought to feel towards them.*

Hence a decent interment of the dead, and a proper respect for their sepulchres, become of great practical importance, in the promotion of humanity and justice, and love to our neighbors and friends : and

Hence we see the reason, not only why natural affection requires a decent and affectionate interment of the dead, but why this is sanctioned by the word of God, and the invariable practice of his people in every age.

INFERENCES.

I. We infer, from this subject, the inhumanity and impiety of forcibly taking the dead from their graves.

If it is a dictate of nature, sanctioned by the word of God, and by all the principles of our holy religion, sol-

* We would by no means insinuate that the simple act of dissecting a human body, necessarily implies any want of Christian tenderness in the dissector. If the body be righteously obtained, and the operator, and others, came to the examination of it with proper views and feelings, there can be no doubt, but that they will go away with more exalted views of the wisdom, power and goodness of their Creator, and with a deeper sense of their entire dependence on Him for their every breath. But, if there be guilt in obtaining the body, and they be knowingly partakers of this guilt, it is very certain, that they cannot come to the examination of it, with any proper or religious feelings ; but the contrary. And if they dissect, and examine, the human system with levity, and infidelity, and impiety, instead of receiving any good, their wickedness and guilt will be greatly increased by it. But, whatever may be the guilt or innocence of the dissector, we still maintain, that the body is thereby subjected to an evil ; an evil which ought to be inflicted on none, but those who, by their crimes *deserve it at the hand of man.*

emnly, and affectionately, to inter our dead, and to desire that they may rest undisturbed, then it must be unnatural, and inhuman, and impious, to violate their graves, and forcibly to remove them. Conduct so diametrically opposite cannot proceed from one and the same spirit. The feelings of those, who go in the darkness and silence of the night, and with the fear and hurry of a thief, break open the houses of the dead, and, with a halter about the neck, violently pull the dead from their coffins, must be different from the feelings of those, who go in the open day, and, with deep solemnity, and pious grief, sacredly, and tenderly, commit them to the grave. If the one class of feelings proceeds from a christian spirit, or even from natural affection, then the other must proceed from hardened impiety, or brutal stupidity. If we deny the criminality, and impiety, of forcibly taking the dead from their graves, then we must deny, that Christianity, or even natural affection, leads us to place them there. Let us admit, then, for a moment, that we violate no dictate of nature, or of religion, in not burying our friends. It becomes then, on this supposition, equally proper, and humane, and pious, for us to throw them into the fire, or cast them to the dogs, as to lay them in the sepulchre. Nay, it becomes most proper, and benevolent, that we should send our wives, and children, and parents, and other deceased relatives, as soon as they are dead, to the anatormist to be dissected, for the promotion of medical knowledge, or, if we are poor, that we should sell their bodies for the maintenance of ourselves and surviving family.

If it be said that this would be unnatural, and brutal, we ask on what ground it is thus condemned, if it be not also unnatural, and brutal, to violate the graves of our dead, and drag them out, almost as soon as they are in?

It surely cannot be our duty to inter our dead, merely to give others the trouble of going in the night, and stealing

them away. Much less can it be the duty of a poor man, to be at the expense of a funeral solemnity for the burial of his wife or children, merely that others may have the profits of selling their bodies.

Are we not then unavoidably conducted to this conclusion, that if to inter our dead be a dictate of nature, sanctioned by the word of God, and by all the principles of our holy religion, the practice of stealing away their bodies after they are buried, must be sacrilegious and inhuman?

But it is objected to this conclusion, that the moral nature of the act of taking away the dead, after they are buried, must depend on the nature of the motive, from which they are taken. It is admitted on all hands, that if they are taken for the sake of “filthy lucre,” or to offer insult to the dead, or to wound the feelings of the living, it is a vile and inhuman act. But if they are taken to obtain, and diffuse, a correct knowledge of the human system, on which knowledge depends all rational prospect of success in the healing art, so good an end, it is contended, must do away all ground for the imputation of guilt to the person thus taking and using them. This reasoning carries with it such an air of truth, and candor, and benevolence, and, withal, is addressed so much to our vanity, as persons who would be thought to have risen above vulgar prejudices, and to be liberal friends to the progress of science, that it would be strange indeed if some, even of those, who mean to encourage nothing but truth and equity, were not so taken with it, as to be more than half inclined to justify the practice, for the support of which it is so zealously adduced.

Such persons will admit that there is something not quite regular in the affair; but then the end, for which they conceive it is absolutely necessary, that it should be done, is so incalculably important, the motive of those,

who do it, is so pure and benevolent, and the harm done to others, especially if it is never known to them, is so trifling, that they conclude, it is one of those evils, which must be winked at, and which can bring no great guilt upon the authors of it. But there needs no stronger refutation of this fallacious reasoning, than the fact, that none wish to have it applied to themselves, in regard to the dissection of the bodies of their own relatives, whom they tenderly love, and sacredly venerate.

Here nature speaks, and loudly protests against the self-application of that specious show of reasoning, by which they could justify the clandestine removal, and dissection, of the dead of others. And it is certainly an evidence of the blinding and deceitful nature of sin, that we can so easily persuade ourselves to practise, and to justify, that, in regard to others, which we are so ready to condemn when practised towards us. But let us look a moment at the principle, on which this reasoning is founded. The motive of the actor determines the moral quality of the action. By the motive of the person is meant we suppose that immediate end, or object, which excites him to action. If this object be a bad one, it makes the action put forth to obtain it, bad : if it be good in itself, the action of seeking it cannot be wrong. Now, as specious as this may seem, we hesitate not to say, that it is radically defective, and has brought more sin, and mischief, upon society, than any other of the deceitful workings of the depraved heart. It was in fact the origin of that first of human sins, "which brought death into the world with all our woe."

The object, which excited Eve to action, in eating the forbidden fruit, was in itself a good one. She intended to harm no one, in what she did, but only to obtain that important knowledge, which should raise her to the level of a superior rank of beings ; which should enable her to be-

come “as gods, knowing good and evil.” Paul intended nothing, in his persecution of Christ, but the maintenance of that religious establishment, which had proceeded from God himself, and which he conceived to be so infinitely important to the welfare of man. He saw that the new sect of Christians was about to overturn this divine establishment, and that, if he would maintain the latter, he must extirpate the former. And though he was obliged to use some violent measures for the accomplishment of God’s service, yet as they were the only means he conceived, by which he could effect his purpose, he found no difficulty in persuading himself, that the vast importance, and the holiness of the end would justify him in any measures that promised success. And thousands in every age have, in like manner, sought the accomplishment of ends, good in themselves, and which they conceived to be vastly important to the world, by fair means, if they could, but by foul means, if they must ; and when conscience has remonstrated at the miseries they have heaped upon others, standing in the way of their object, the justice, and holiness, and necessity, of their end have been called in aid to justify and sanctify their means. Now the grand defect, the radical corruption of the principle on which all this proceeds, lies, in not distinguishing between the seeking of that, which is good in itself, and the seeking of it with an ultimate reference to God’s glory, and in the way, and in that way alone, which he has revealed in his word. In one sense it is true, that if a person means well, if his intention is good, he cannot essentially err. For, if he does not have an ultimate reference to God’s glory, in whatsoever he does, his intention cannot be right and good ; he cannot be said to mean well. “*Whether therefore ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*” And if a person means well, in this sense, he must govern himself by the plain principles and in-

junctions of God's revealed word. To seek the divine glory in a neglect of, or disobedience to, the divine word, is a palpable contradiction.

Eve sought that which was good in itself; but then she sought it not with a view to God's glory; if she had, she never would have sought it in a way, which God had expressly forbidden. The same may he said of Paul, and of all others, who have done evil that good might come, and of whom the Apostle himself says, that their damnation is just; yea, and of all too, who say "Let us do evil, that good may come."

If therefore the interment of our dead, and the protection of their sepulchres, be in conformity to the principles and requirements of God's word, the contrary acts, of breaking into their sepulchres, and forcibly conveying away their bodies, must be in contradiction to his word. And if in contradiction to his word, then they cannot be meant for his glory; and if not intended for his glory, then the intention in doing them cannot be right and good. Here then we are confident that every Christian will resolutely plant his foot, and advance not a single step in deviation from God's word, however vast the good to be effected by it. We are confident, that every Christian physician, and surgeon, will most conscientiously refrain from even the least intrusion upon the rights of others, and from offering the least encouragement, or countenance, to others to do this, though, by doing it, they should be able to be more beneficial to themselves and to the world.*

* It will be obvious to all, that we are here reasoning on premises assumed by others, but which we by no means allow; viz. that we may, on the whole, be more beneficial to the world, by some deviations from truth and order. The least sin, in its natural tendency, will vastly outbalance, by its destructive consequences upon ourselves and others, all the temporal good effected by it. If a single soul is hardened in sin, by the practice of stealing dead bodies, the evil thus occasioned, must infinitely outweigh all the good, which the science of Anatomy ever did, or ever will do, to the bodies of men. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

If the period in Divine Providence has not yet arrived, for the knowledge of anatomy to be universally diffused, and for mankind to receive the greatest benefit that can result from a perfect knowledge of it, we trust they will wait patiently for it, and seek to do good no faster than they may do it lawfully. "If a man strive for the mastery, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully."

But all this reasoning, and scripture, to the contrary notwithstanding, we are still met by the assertion, that removing the dead, for the benefit of the living, is, and must be, a harmless thing, provided it be done with such caution, and prudence, that the friends never know it, and especially if those are removed, that leave no friends to be disturbed with it.

The dead, it is urged, can suffer nothing by this treatment of their bodies, nor can they be of any further use to their friends who have had all the satisfaction to be obtained from them, in decently burying them.

Now granting, what we presume no one will be disposed to deny, that the dead are not made unhappy by any mal-treatment of their bodies, and that the living are not the less happy for it, if they are entirely ignorant of it, it will be no difficult matter to show, that this justification of removing the dead is founded on the most corrupt and pernicious principles. Principles, which if admitted as rules of action, and generally practised upon, must break down the barriers of vice, and let in iniquity like a flood. These principles obviously are, that it is harmless to take that from a man which we believe is useless to him; and that, if a man is robbed, and never knows it, he is in no way injured, or harmed by the person thus depriving him of his property. The bodies of the dead, if they rest in their graves, must moulder to dust, and can do their friends no good by lying there; hence, the inference is, it is right, and harmless, to take these bodies, in a clandestine man-

ner, and appropriate them to some useful purpose. According to this rule, all our grave yards may be lawfully emptied of all their dead. All money, which we know to be lying useless, and which their covetous possessors will never touch, may be secretly, and lawfully, taken from them for the use of ourselves, and others. If it be taken so artfully, and privately, that they know it not, they are in no way injured by it. The man, who can commit adultery with his neighbor's wife without being detected in it, is no adulterer; nor is his neighbor at all injured by him, so long as he is ignorant of the fact. He is not at all the less happy for this crime, any more than he would be, if his neighbor were to take the body of his dead, and he knew it not. On this principle too, a man may lie, as often as he is disposed, provided his lie will be of some use to himself or to others, and he makes no one the less happy by it. But it is said, in reply, that lying, and theft, and adultery, are expressly forbidden by God's law, and therefore, can never, under any circumstances, be innocently committed. And is it not stealing, also, in the plain, and obvious sense of God's law, to take that, to which we know a man has a better right than we, and which we know too that he would on no account, such is his high value of it, consent to our taking, if he were upon the spot? What if it is no gain to the living, to have their dead rest in their graves, this does not lessen their value of the privilege, nor their right to enjoy it. We presume there are but few, who would not rather see their dwellings robbed of all their property, than their sepulchres robbed of the body of a wife, or child, or parent, or brother, or sister. It is far from being the only satisfaction we enjoy, in the burial of our friends, to lay them in the grave; it is another, and equally great, to know that they are resting there undisturbed; to know that they have not been torn from their coffins, for menied and scientific

speculation, and exposed to the rude gaze of unbearded youth. But it is said, and we know not what will not be said in support of an unrighteous and tottering cause, that we have no right to examine our sepulchres, to see if our dead are there, or not. It is enough for us that we have decently buried them. And if we officially examine, and find them gone, then we are the guilty authors of our own distress, and of all the difficulty that ensues ; since, if we had not examined, all would have been peace and quietness. So then, the man that examines, and finds that his house has been robbed, is the guilty author of his own loss, and of all the difficulty that follows. The injured husband, and not the adulterer, must bear all the guilt of the crime, if he is so unfortunate as to know it, as well as all the evil of having his family disgraced, and his domestic happiness ruined.

But admitting the correctness of these remarks, in regard to the bodies of those, who leave friends to claim them, it surely cannot do any harm to take the bodies of strangers. And why not ? May not the privilege of burial, and of resting undisturbed be as highly prized by strangers, and the friendless, as by those, who leave numerous relatives ? If there is no one to protect their bodies, and if advantage is taken of this, their misfortune, the inhumanity and injustice towards them would seem to be increased, rather than diminished. However peaceably, and uprightly, a stranger may have demeaned himself in the country, where he breathes his last, he is still to be treated, as to his body, no better than the worst of felons ! Is this honest, is this hospitable, is this christian conduct ? It is true, the stranger, after death, is insensible of the treatment of his body. But still he is wronged ; and the guilt of those, who do the wrong, is the same as though he knew it. Besides, if this be tolerated, if it become a general practice, to take the bodies of strangers, without

regard to age, or sex, the suffering, in anticipation, of such an evil, by those, who value the privilege of burial, and who would shrink at the very thought of such an exposure of their bodies upon anatomical theatres, must be no small punishment for the innocent to undergo, merely because they are strangers.*

Thus we think we have fully shown the inhumanity and impiety of forcibly removing the dead, and that all the pleas in justification or extenuation of this practice are built on the most corrupt and pernicious principles. But still the imperious necessity of it, in order to the maintenance of the very important science of anatomy, seems to haunt the minds of some, and to render them almost deaf to the conclusions of reason, and scripture. And is this necessity then so great, that, with the knowledge of anatomy already possessed by the world, and the legal means of promoting it, and especially the dissection of the bodies of all, who are executed by the hand of justice, the science must essentially suffer, and be eventually lost, without an extensive, and an indiscriminate dissection of the dead? And why then do we not see these liberal and zealous patrons of the science, and especially those, who are professionally interested in its advancement, taking their own dead, as well as the dead of others, for this benevolent purpose? If charity should begin at home, in the diffusion of her benefits, should she not also begin at home, in making those sacrifices, which are necessary to enable her to do good? That charity certainly is of a very suspicious kind, which, sparing her own, is very liberal with

* Those who witnessed the distressing apprehensions of an amiable, and pious young lady, the daughter of a Clergyman in this vicinity, who, some eight or ten months since, thought she had reason to fear such a use of her body, (an exposure from which her modest and refined sensibility shrunk with horror,) and heard her repeated, and dying request of her affectionate parents, to protect her from it, must know, that this suffering, in anticipation, is no chimera of the writers brain. And who could censure parental caution, in such a case, in "setting a watch," and "making it sure," but those who were disappointed of their prey?

the property of others. May we not expect then, that all medical gentlemen, and others, who advocate an indiscriminate dissection of the dead, and who mean to act consistently with their principles, will first volunteer their own bodies, and if these are not sufficient, proceed to take the bodies of their deceased wives, and children, and parents, and other relatives, to be dissected, and exposed, both in private and public seminaries ? If they should conclude thus to act, in consistency with their own principles, we might reasonably expect, that such a numerous corps of volunteers, as they would make, would be amply sufficient for the well being of anatomy, and that the rest of the public might, for the present at least, safely dismiss their fears, and the painful anxiety, and trouble, of watching, night after night, for the security of their dead. We have a right also to expect, that all medical and surgical *gentlemen*, if they should still find it necessary, not only to take their own dead, but the dead of others, to qualify them to do us good, in their important art, will have the generosity and politeness to give us our choice, either to hazard our health and lives, by reason of their unskilfulness, or bid them welcome to the use of our dead ; and not insist on doing us good, on their own terms, whether we will, or not.

2. We infer from this subject the reasonableness, and the duty, of sorrowing for the loss of our dead.

As some would have us believe, that the interment of the dead is founded on nothing better than custom, so they would persuade us, that to mourn for their being taken from their graves, is the offspring of nothing but weakness, or superstition. But we have seen that the former rests on divine authority, and proceeds from the best feelings of the human heart. Hence the latter must be equally in accordance with scripture, and equally required by the feelings of nature, and the ties of friendship. Not to mourn when our sepulchres are violated, and our dead

stolen, is to despise a privilege exceedingly precious to all, not destitute of natural affection, is to deny the faith, and show ourselves to be worse than infidels.

Unquestionably in this, as in every other affliction, we should sorrow with submission to the will of God. For though bereaved of our dead, by the evil hand of the wicked, who are set on by an accursed desire of filthy lucre, yet God, who reigns over all, hath, for wise ends, permitted it to come upon us. It becomes us, therefore, to view his hand, and to acknowledge his justice in it; to confide in his mercy, and to beseech him so to sanctify it unto us, that while we mourn for the loss of our dead, we may not sorrow as those who have no hope; and that while we hold in abhorrence the inhuman act of dragging them from their graves, we may hold ourselves ready to forgive the perpetrators of it, whenever they shall request it, with suitable signs of repentance and reformation.

To such, or similar views and feelings, my afflicted friends, I trust you have not been strangers, in passing through the late extraordinary scene, in which you found yourselves doubly bereaved of your deceased relatives and friends. In this severe and unexpected trial, you have had your sorrows in parting with them at death not only called up afresh, but greatly aggravated and increased. Like the afflicted disciples, you have been shocked with the distressing tidings, "They have taken away your friend out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him." Like them, you have stood at the grave in deep distress, and looked in, and seen the place where the body of your friend had lain; though, like them, you have not had so much as the satisfaction of seeing "the linen clothes lie, and the napkin that was about his head." Like the weeping and disconsolate Mary, you have been ready to ask of one, and another, "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him; and I will

take him away." May your sorrow, like theirs, soon be alleviated by the gracious manifestation of your Lord unto you, and the blessed hope that he will bring again the bodies of your deceased friends, as he did his own, and cause them to stand at the latter day on the earth. We tender you our sincere sympathy, in your deep distress, and commend you to that Being, who is able to make all things work together for good to them that love him.

3. We infer from this subject the duty of every people to guard, as much as possible, the houses of their dead from insult, and robbery.

It is not sufficient merely to sympathize with those, who have been thus inhumanly bereaved, and to wish that the like may not occur again. Equity to the dead, as well as to the living, and pity for the deluded perpetrators of the crime, requires that we should make every lawful effort to bring them to justice, and if possible to repentance, and reformation. To have such wickedness as this unrestrained, to have our confidence in the safety and peace of our dead, utterly destroyed, is certainly a public calamity, and calls for the united efforts of all the well-wishers to Society, to put an end to it. The state of morals, not to say of religion, must be truly deplorable amongst that people, who can behold with approbation, or indifference, the tombs of their dead violated, and their bodies carried off. That sensibility, which is not roused to action in view of such a sense, must be morbid indeed. Not to take every prudent and lawful measure, in such a case, to bring to justice the guilty authors of the deed, is to partake of their guilt, and to join issue with them in their crimes.

My friends and fellow citizens,

Under the very melancholy and distressing scene, we have been called to witness in this place, it is a subject of devout congratulation that we are not so lost to all natural

Blunder me I did

affection, and to all the dictates of reason, and scripture, as to hesitate a moment, whether to justify or to condemn, the sacrilegious robbery of the dead. It is a matter of unfeigned thankfulness that though many vices abound amongst us, and though this almost unprecedented one has sprung up in the midst of us, we have piety enough to venerate our dead, and to refuse to see their sepulchres profaned, and robbed, without expressing our abhorrence of the crime, and taking suitable measures to expose the authors of it, and to restore, if possible, our wonted confidence in the security of our dead.

If these measures are without success, you will have the satisfaction of reflecting that you did what you could. Even defeat in so good a cause, if nothing be wanting on your part, will be entitled to all the merit of a victory, and will equally deserve a triumph. It is also no small matter of thankfulness, that under the particular excitement of feelings, which such an inhuman robbery must be supposed to create, you were enabled to maintain so good a degree of moderation, along with firmness and decision : to temper your counsels with prudence and justice, as well as with energy.

Now that the excitement of the moment has gone by, we have an opportunity of looking at the deed in its true light. And I trust the more we look at it, and the more we compare it with the dictates of nature, the principles of reason, and scripture, and the examples of the good in every age, the more settled will be our abhorrence of it, and the more firmly shall we set our faces against it. God grant that the day may be far distant, when we shall cease to feel indignant at such an outrage upon religion and humanity.*

* Glows my resentment into guilt? what guilt,
Can equal violations of the dead?
The dead how sacred! sacred is the dust
Of this heaven labored form, erect, divine!
This heaven assumed, majestic robe of earth,
He deigned to wear, who hung the vast expanse
With azure bright, and clothed the sun in gold.

We have assembled this day, beloved friends, to express, in this public and religious manner, our veneration for the dead, our abhorrence of every profane violation of them, and our sympathy with those, whose feelings have been more immediately outraged in the late atrocious acts. We have assembled to inter again those coffins, which once contained the bodies of beloved friends, but which are now all that sacrilegious hands have left us, as memorials of them. As precious, though but poor relicts of the stolen dead, we will again inter them, and erect a monument upon their grave, which shall declare to children's children the melancholy scene we have witnessed, and which may bid the hand of avarice beware of making merchandize of the dead.

May God enable us so to cherish the memory of the dead, as to prepare to follow them; and so to believe on the Lord Jesus, that our souls at death, being "made perfect in holiness," may "immediately pass into glory," and our "bodies, being still united to Christ," may "rest in their graves till the resurrection."

